COTTON CHATS

DRAPER CORPORATION
HOPEDALE, MASSACHUSETTS

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TRADE-MARK REG. U.S. PAT. OFF. AND IN CANADA

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HOPEDALE MASS.

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HOW A MASTER MECHANIC INCREASED MILL PROFITS

"Because I had an inquiring mind for new methods, studied costs and hunted ways to reduce them."

Thus spoke the agent of a successful textile plant who had started as a Master Mechanic. He had been asked how he, without textile school education or practical experience as carder, spinner or weaver, had out-distanced the men with these advantages.

The remark gave promise of a good story. The questioner proved an interested and helpful listener.

"As a young man I landed the job as master mechanic of this mill. It had a well-equipped machine shop, and I felt that my life's ambition had been attained.

"My orders, like those to hundreds of master mechanics before and since, were to make all possible supplies and repair parts for the producing machines. This was supposed to save the profit on making them and reduce outside bills which appeared so large to the treasurer.

"Soon after taking charge, my attention was attracted to the time wasted by high-priced mechanics in waiting on the loomfixers who had the run of the shop.

"I built a supply room with a bin for each and every part we carried, put a clerk in charge and separated this room entirely from the machine shop. The fixers dealt only with the supply clerk, received immediate service or were told we did not have the part; and in a few months we had our stock so arranged and completed that we were seldom without the part wanted.

"With my machinists on the job all the time, we found we could dispense with the services of two of them.

"The supply clerk soon reported that he was overstocked on pieces for which there was only a limited annual demand and on other parts for which he could find no use.

"Investigation showed that when a machinist needed work, the foreman looked over our stock of patterns, found one on which the supply of castings was low and gave out a job to make up a quantity.

"I instructed the shop to work only on orders from the millwrights and men making our general repairs, or from the supply clerk, who was to carry only such stock as protected us from having machines stopped for repair parts.

DISCOVERS HIS HANDICAPS

"A long-standing cause of friction between our shop and the overseers was the claim of the latter that our castings did not quite fit their machines. I had good pattern-makers and machinists and was sure I could duplicate the parts on any machine in the mill.

"Determined to make good, I studied the weave room troubles with the overseer, seeking to put myself in his place and get his viewpoint. The experience was an eye-opener.

"I didn't give up, however. I visited your plant to find some way to duplicate your castings. I saw how badly I was handicapped.

"I did not have the original drawings to work from. I must use hand patterns, with their inaccuracies in moulding, where you used machines and match-plates. Your foundry worked from a fixed iron formula while our local foundry was not careful in this respect. Your inspectors had the accumulated knowledge of years and ingenious gauges that enabled them to discover defects that men with less knowledge of the particular needs of an automatic loom would pass.

"In short, I discovered that I was not producing repair parts that gave the same results on the looms as the parts made by you. Further, I did not see any possibility of doing so.

NEARLY LOST HIS JOB

"That discovery came near being my Waterloo. I had the enthusiasm of youth, intense loyalty to the mill and an uneasy conscience.

"Once started, I was determined to see the end. I found we had made patterns on which we could never get our money back. We were charging parts to the supply room at the cost per pound of the rough castings. Figuring the finishing as fill-in work for our mechanics, we were taking no account of defective castings we could not use, of those spoiled in our own shop or of tools ruined in working castings that were too hard. I found these losses wiped out our imagined savings on most of the repairs we were making.

"Then I went to the superintendent. I told him I could reduce the annual cost of maintenance of our machines and increase production if allowed to purchase from the machine-builders a considerable part of our repairs. I had the figures all worked out. In losses saved and gains made possible they totaled in the thousands and looked very imposing to me.

"For my pains, I heard much about the folly of theories and some uncomplimentary personal remarks.

Finally I was told that the Treasurer never complained about foundry or machine shop bills, but would raise ructions if called upon to approve a monthly grist of bills for repairs.

"A year later, under a new superintendent, I was given a free hand. I worked with the overseers of the different departments, and in a short time we showed remarkable savings, got an increased product and had a feeling of co-operation and good will among the machine-tenders of the mill.

"When that superintendent became agent, he made me his superintendent. On his death, I became agent.

"My machine shop is now a strictly emergency shop. We employ only the actual number of mechanics required for regular emergency work. We have some of our best loomfixers enrolled as mechanics for service in case of a big breakdown, for which they get overtime pay. For special needs I have an arrangement with a machine shop in the city for call men.

"If my Treasurer ever complains about the bills from the machine-builders or for emergency work on a breakdown, I have the figures of the big saving we are making every year. Those savings actually mean larger dividends."

Have you made your master mechanic a part of your production organization, with untied hands, free to investigate?

Do you pay him on the basis of cloth produced and low cost of machine maintenance? Or is his salary fixed by the size of his shop and number of men employed?

Do you regard your machine shop as a necessary evil in your mill—to be kept on the emergency basis only? In these days of specialists in manufacturing, any other basis will reduce your annual profits.